

Hobbies

Treasury staff's proposal would aid Mint's retail coin sales

By Roger Boye

Treasury personnel are drafting legislation that should help the federal government improve its commemorative and bullion coin programs.

Among other things, the legislation would set up a "revolving public enterprise fund for numismatic operations" within the United States Mint and would allow mint staffers to react more quickly to changing market conditions when selling coins.

"It is the intent of the legislation to establish the mint's

numismatic operations on a more business-like footing," according to a U. S. Mint report released in mid-September. "The legislation recognizes that the mint's numismatic programs depend on retail sales to consumers, similar to any other commercial enterprise."

If the proposal becomes law, officials would be able to survey mint customers without having to comply with restrictions of the Paperwork Reduction Act. Mint executives want to be able to conduct narrowly focused market research on a voluntary basis so that their programs can thrive.

Also, operations under the new enterprise fund would be exempt from federal procurement and public contract laws, and firms acting as consignees selling mint products would be exempted from being considered government contractors. In the past, some businesses have refused to participate in mint programs to avoid the contractor status, resulting in a loss of marketing power, according to the mint.

The 25-page report noted that Uncle Sam's American Eagle bullion coins must compete with coins produced by other national mints, many of which have been

established as "crown corporations" or quasi-government organizations to make them more responsive "to the changing demands of the international markets."

U. S. Mint officials also are taking steps to enhance the mint's accounting staff and to design a fully integrated, automated financial management system. A recent review by the U. S. General Accounting Office concluded that the mint does not have a modern financial system, a problem the GAO said is typical of the federal government today.